



Comparing Acquisitive Crime to Rape

The logic of victim blaming says that by being in a certain place, or wearing a certain thing, or consuming a certain substance, or being in a certain relationship, a woman has forfeited protections against violence. Placing responsibility with victims of sexual violence rather than perpetrators is an obvious and grotesque injustice to those who have been abused or attacked, but there's also a secondary and more widespread effect that applies to all women: by laying out a set of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" behaviours, victim blaming tells women what they may and may not do, and that the punishment for crossing the line could well be rape.

But when campaigns such as EVB object to this grotesque logic, there's a certain refrain that rises up in response, self-satisfied in the belief in its own commonsense: "But shouldn't we tell women how to avoid becoming victims of crime?" it says. "Don't we tell people to conceal their possessions to protect themselves from robbery? Isn't advising women against wearing a short skirt just like advising people not to leave a laptop on display in a parked car?"

You yourself may even find this plausible, but it rests on a fundamental error about what rape is. Rape is not a property crime: it is a violent physical assault. So for the next time someone suggests that telling women to protect themselves against rape is the same as advising people to hide valuable property, here's a helpful list of ways in which a laptop is not like a vagina.

1. Not every car contains a vagina

When you carefully tuck your high-value portable property under the passenger seat, it's because you don't want potential thieves to know it's there. But draping your vagina in a floor length modesty frock is unlikely to persuade anyone that don't have one, and therefore might not be worth violating. This is not a quantum mechanics problem. Schödinger's fanny is not a thing.

2. A laptop is a portable electronic device, a vagina is a body part

Does it whir? Does it make small clicking sounds? Can it be placed in a briefcase and carried around separately to its owner? That is a laptop. Is it a fibromuscular tubular tract located between a woman's thighs? Vagina. Taking the former from a car would be an act of theft. Penetrating the latter without the woman's consent would be a physical assault – and that's true even if the woman has behaved in a way that makes it obvious that she has a vagina and sometimes uses it for fun. No one says to the victim of a beating: "Well, anyone could see you had arms. You were just asking to have them broken with all the waving you do."

3. You can't insure a vagina

Having your car broken into and your valuables taken sucks. But, understanding that this is a world where some people can be driven to desperate acts for small rewards, you might make a heavy sigh and sweep up the glass, and then go and put in your insurance claim. Being raped is worse than that. There is no insurance that lets you claim back the state of being not-raped. There's no cloud backup to restore your pre-rape internal data. You've been raped, and that is profoundly horrible.



The idea of rape as a property crime belongs to the pre-feminist era when women were permitted to own nothing apart from that abstract quality called “honour”. Now – oh fortunate modern females! – we are understood to have to rights to all sorts of things, including the right to decide who we do or don’t want in our own orifices. And that’s a right that cannot be forfeited under any circumstance. Whatever we’ve drunk, however we’re dressed and whoever we’ve kissed, a vagina is never a laptop.

This piece is an edited version of one that originally appeared in the [Guardian](#).